

CLAIMS

Sub A1
1 1. A messaging system comprising:

2 a. a message server comprising a plurality of modalities for
3 transmitting messages;

4 b. an interface for receiving a message and a designation of at least
5 some of the transmission modalities;

6 c. a memory for storing escalation rules specifying sequential
7 transmission of the message by means of each of the designated
8 modalities upon occurrence of a specified condition; and

9 d. a routing facility, responsive to the escalation rules and to the
10 occurrence of the conditions, for causing the message to be
11 sequentially transmitted by the message server in accordance with
12 the escalation rules.
13

Sub B1
1 2. The system of claim 1 wherein the condition associated with at least
2 some of the modalities is non-receipt of the message transmitted via said
3 modalities.
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1 3. The system of claim 1 wherein the modalities comprise electronic mail,
2 facsimile transmission, public telephone network, cellular telephone, pager,
3 and postal mail.

1 4. The system of claim 3 wherein the condition associated with telephone
2 transmission is non-receipt of the message, the system further comprising
3 means for detecting said non-receipt.

1 5. The system of claim 1 further comprising means for notifying, by means
2 of at least one of the transmission modalities, a source of a message that the
3 message has been received.

1 6. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface comprises means for
2 receiving escalation rules from a message sender.

1 7. The system of claim 1 wherein the escalation rules specify a default
2 transmission modality, the routing facility causing the message to be
3 transmitted via the default modality if no designation is received by the
4 interface.

1 8. The system of claim 1 further comprising:

- 2 a. means facilitating response to a received message, the message
3 server receiving the responses; and

4 b. a memory for collecting records of the responses, the interface
5 being configured to tabulate and present the records in a summary
6 format.

7
1 9. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface is further configured to
2 receive, from a message sender, a list of recipients for the message and
3 escalation rules for each recipient, the routing facility causing the message to
4 be transmitted to each recipient by the message server in accordance with
5 the escalation rules.

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1 10. The system of claim 1 wherein the interface is further configured to
2 receive, from a message sender, a global list of potential message recipients
3 and criteria associated with each potential recipient, the interface facilitating
4 searching of the list based on specified criteria and identification of potential
5 recipients whose recipient criteria match the specified criteria.

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1 11. The system of claim 10 wherein the recipient criteria for each potential
2 recipient include escalation rules for that potential recipient.

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Sub A3 } 12. A messaging system comprising:

2 a. a message server comprising a plurality of modalities for
3 transmitting messages;

Sub 4
A3 5

b. an interface for receiving a message comprising a plurality of segments encoded in different formats, and a designation of at least some of the transmission modalities;

c. an analysis facility for (i) determining the segment formats, (ii) identifying, from among the designated transmission modalities, the modalities appropriate to the segments, and (iii) composing the segments into messages suitable for transmission by the identified modalities; and

d. a routing facility for causing at least some of the composed messages to be transmitted by the identified modalities.

13. The system of claim 12 wherein the interface is further configured to receive, from a message sender, a global list of potential message recipients and criteria associated with each potential recipient, the interface facilitating searching of the list based on specified criteria and identification of potential recipients whose recipient criteria match the specified criteria.

14. The system of claim 12 wherein the interface is further configured to receive, from a message sender, a global list of potential message recipients and criteria associated with each potential recipient, the recipient criteria for each potential recipient including allowed modalities for that potential recipient, the routing facility causing the message to be delivered to

6 designated ones of the potential recipients by means of the allowed
7 modalities for said designated recipients.
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1 15. The system of claim 12 further comprising:

- 2 a. means facilitating response to a received message, the message
3 server receiving the responses; and
4 b. a memory for collecting records of the responses, the interface
5 being configured to tabulate and present the records in a summary
6 format.

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1 17. The system of claim 16 wherein the scheduling criteria include at least
2 one of (a) blackout periods during which the at least one designated modality
3 may not be used and (b) time windows during which the at least one
4 designated modality may be used, the routing facility causing transmission to
5 occur at a time consistent with the scheduling criteria.
6

5b
1 18. The system of claim 17 wherein the interface further receives a
2 designation of a recipient for the message and information indicative of a
3 location of the recipient, the system further comprising means for obtaining a
4 time of day at the location of the recipient and determining whether the
5 location time of day is consistent with the scheduling criteria.
6

1 19. The system of claim 16 wherein the interface is further configured to
2 receive the scheduling criteria from a message sender.
3

1 20. The system of claim 19 wherein the criteria comprise a time of day at
2 the location of the recipient, the interface receiving a designation of a
3 recipient for the message and information indicative of a location of the
4 recipient, the routing module being configured to obtain a time of day at the
5 location of the recipient and to cause transmission of the message at the
6 designated recipient-location time of day.
7

1 21. The system of claim 19 wherein the scheduling criteria include a
2 transmission-start time, a transmission-end time, and a preference
3 therebetween.
4

1 22. The system of claim 16 wherein the interface is further configured to
2 receive, from a message sender, a global list of potential message recipients
3 and scheduling criteria associated with each potential recipient, the routing
4 facility being responsive to the scheduling criteria and causing messages to
5 be delivered to designated ones of the potential recipients in accordance with
6 the scheduling criteria associated therewith.
7

Sub A 1 23. A messaging system comprising:

2 a. a message server comprising a plurality of communication
3 modalities for transmitting messages;

4 b. an interface for receiving (i) a message inviting a response, (ii) a
5 plurality of recipients, and (iii) for each recipient, a designation of at
6 least one of the communication modalities;

7 c. a routing facility, responsive to the designation, for causing
8 transmission of the message by means of the designated modalities,
9 wherein

10 d. the communication modalities are configured to remotely receive the
11 responses from the recipients; and

Sub A7 } 12 e. the interface is configured to present a tabulated version of the
13 responses.
14

4b 1 24. The system of claim 23 wherein a plurality of modalities is designated
2 and, for at least some of the modalities, the message comprises instructions
3 facilitating later response by the recipient via at least one specified
4 communication modality.
5

1 25. The system of claim 24 wherein the message server comprises a web
2 server and at least one specified communication modality is a web page
3 transmitted to the user and facilitating response selection and transmission
4 of the response to the web server.
5

1 26. The system of claim 24 wherein the message server comprises a
2 telephony server and at least one specified communication modality is
3 telephone contact with the telephony server, the telephony server being
4 configured to receive the response.
5

1 27. The system of claim 26 wherein the response is received by means of
2 touch-tone pulses.
3

1 28. The system of claim 26 wherein the response is received by means of
2 speech recognition.

3

1 29. The system of claim 23 wherein the interface presents the tabulated
2 responses in the form of a web page.

3

1 30. A messaging system comprising:

- 2 a. a message server comprising a plurality of communication
3 modalities for transmitting messages, the modalities including
4 telephony, the message server comprising a telephony server;
5 b. an interface for receiving a message and a designation of at least
6 one of the communication modalities;
7 c. a routing facility, responsive to the designation, for causing
8 transmission of the message by means of the designated modalities;
9 wherein
10 d. the telephony server is configured to discriminate between
11 individuals and telephone-answering devices, and to detect receipt
12 of the message by an individual.

13

1 31. The system of claim 30 wherein the interface is configured to report
2 receipt of the message by an individual.

3

1 32. The system of claim 30 wherein the telephony server is configured to
2 append to the message, upon detection of a telephone-answering device,

3 instructions for subsequently establishing a telephone connection to the
4 telephony server to confirm receipt of the message.
5

Sub A2 1 33. A method of transmitting messages, the method comprising the steps of:

2 a. receiving a message and a designation of at least some of a plurality
3 of transmission modalities;

4 b. storing escalation rules specifying sequential transmission of the
5 message by means of each of the designated modalities upon
6 occurrence of a specified condition; and

7 c. causing the message to be sequentially transmitted in accordance
8 with the escalation rules.
9

1 34. The method of claim 33 wherein the condition associated with at least
2 some of the modalities is non-receipt of the message transmitted via said
3 modalities.
4

1 35. The method of claim 33 wherein the modalities comprise electronic mail,
2 facsimile transmission, public telephone network, cellular telephone, pager,
3 and postal mail.
4

1 36. The method of claim 35 wherein the condition associated with telephone
2 transmission is non-receipt of the message, the method further comprising
3 the step of detecting said non-receipt.

4
1 37. The method of claim 33 further comprising the step of notifying, via at
2 least one of the transmission modalities, a source of a message that the
3 message has been received.
4

1 38. The method of claim 33 wherein the escalation rules specify a default
2 transmission modality, the message being transmitted via the default
3 modality if no designation is received by the interface.
4

1 39. The method of claim 33 further comprising the steps of:
2 a. facilitating response to a received message;
3 b. collecting records of the responses; and
4 c. tabulating and presenting the records in a summary format.
5

1 40. The method of claim 33 further comprising the steps of:
2 a. receiving, from a message sender, a list of recipients for the
3 message and escalation rules for each recipient; and
4 b. causing the message to be transmitted to each recipient by the
5 message server in accordance with the escalation rules.
6

1 41. The method of claim 33 further comprising the steps of:
2 a. receiving, from a message sender, a global list of potential message
3 recipients and criteria associated with each potential recipient; and

4 b. facilitating searching of the list based on specified criteria and
5 identification of potential recipients whose recipient criteria match
6 the specified criteria.

7
1 42. The method of claim 41 wherein the recipient criteria for each potential
2 recipient include escalation rules for that potential recipient.

3
43. A method of messaging, the method comprising the steps of:

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- 1 a. receiving a message comprising a plurality of segments encoded in
2 different formats, and a designation of at least some of a plurality of
3 transmission modalities;
4
5 b. determining the segment formats;
6
7 c. identifying, from among the designated transmission modalities, the
8 modalities appropriate to the segments;
9
10 d. composing the segments into messages suitable for transmission by
11 the identified modalities; and
12
13 e. causing at least some of the composed messages to be transmitted
14 by the identified modalities.

1 44. The method of claim 43 further comprising the steps of:

- 2 a. receiving, from a message sender, a global list of potential message
3 recipients and criteria associated with each potential recipient; and

4 b. facilitating (i) searching of the list based on specified criteria and (ii)
5 identification of potential recipients whose recipient criteria match
6 the specified criteria.

1 45. The method of claim 43 further comprising the steps of:

- 2 a. receiving, from a message sender, a global list of potential message
3 recipients and criteria associated with each potential recipient, the
4 recipient criteria for each potential recipient including allowed
5 modalities for that potential recipient; and
6 b. causing the message to be delivered to designated ones of the
7 potential recipients by means of the allowed modalities for said
8 designated recipients.

1 46. The method of claim 33 further comprising the steps of:

- 2 a. facilitating responses to a message; and
3 b. collecting records of the responses; and
4 c. tabulating and presenting the records in a summary format.

5
Sub 1 47. A method of messaging, the method comprising the steps of:

- 2 a. receiving a message and a designation of at least one of a plurality
3 of transmission modalities;
4 b. storing scheduling criteria governing use of the at least one
5 designated modality; and

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6 c. causing transmission of the message by means of the at least one
7 designated modality in accordance with the scheduling criteria
8 therefor.

9
1 48. The method of claim 47 wherein the scheduling criteria include at least
2 one of (a) blackout periods during which the at least one designated modality
3 may not be used and (b) time windows during which the at least one
4 designated modality may be used, transmission occurring at a time
5 consistent with the scheduling criteria.

6
1 49. The method of claim 48 further comprising the steps of:
2 a. receiving a designation of a recipient for the message and
3 information indicative of a location of the recipient;
4 b. obtaining a time of day at the location of the recipient; and
5 c. determining whether the location time of day is consistent with the
6 scheduling criteria.

7
1 50. The method of claim 47 wherein the criteria comprise a time of day at
2 the location of the recipient, and further comprising the steps of:
3 a. receiving a designation of a recipient for the message and
4 information indicative of a location of the recipient;
5 b. obtaining a time of day at the location of the recipient; and

6 c. cause transmission of the message at the designated recipient-
7 location time of day.
8

1 51. The method of claim 47 wherein the scheduling criteria include a
2 transmission-start time, a transmission-end time, and a preference
3 therebetween.
4

1 52. The method of claim 47 further comprising the steps of:

2 a. receiving, from a message sender, a global list of potential message
3 recipients, scheduling criteria being associated with each potential
4 recipient; and

5 b. causing messages to be delivered to designated ones of the
6 potential recipients in accordance with the scheduling criteria
7 associated therewith.
8

9 53. A method of messaging, the method comprising the steps of:

10 a. providing a plurality of communication modalities;

11 b. receiving (i) a message inviting a response, (ii) a plurality of
12 recipients, and (iii) for each recipient, a designation of at least one
13 of a plurality of communication modalities;

14 c. causing transmission of the message by means of the designated
15 modalities;

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- 8 d. causing the communication modalities to remotely receive the
9 responses from the recipients; and
10 e. presenting a tabulated version of the responses.
11

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1 54. The method of claim 53 wherein a plurality of modalities is designated
2 and, for at least some of the modalities, the message comprises instructions
3 facilitating later response by the recipient via at least one specified
4 communication modality.

1 55. The method of claim 53 wherein at least one specified communication
2 modality is a web page transmitted to the user and facilitating response
3 selection and transmission of the response.
4

1 56. The method of claim 53 wherein at least one specified communication
2 modality is a telephony server, the telephony server being configured to
3 receive the response.
4

1 57. The method of claim 56 wherein the response is received by means of
2 touch-tone pulses.
3

1 58. The method of claim 56 wherein the response is received by means of
2 speech recognition.
3

1 59. The method of claim 53 wherein the tabulated responses are presented
2 in the form of a web page.
3

1 60. A method of messaging, the method comprising the steps of:

2 a. providing a plurality of communication modalities for transmitting
3 messages, the modalities including a telephony server;

4 b. receiving a message and a designation of at least one of the
5 communication modalities; and

6 c. causing transmission of the message by means of the designated
7 modalities;

8 wherein

9 d. the telephony server is configured to discriminate between
10 individuals and telephone-answering devices, and to detect receipt
11 of the message by an individual.
12

1 61. The method of claim 60 further comprising the step of reporting receipt
2 of the message by an individual.
3

1 62. The method of claim 60 wherein the telephony server is configured to
2 append to the message, upon detection of a telephone-answering device,
3 instructions for subsequently establishing a telephone connection to the
4 telephony server to confirm receipt of the message.
5